



Queensland University of Technology
Brisbane Australia

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EDITORIAL

Cara Wrigley
Associate Editor

Research in Design for Innovation, Industry, and Impact

The recent shift in usage of the word Design – from its use as a rather unimaginative noun which seeks to summarise or categorise the features or details of an object without going to the trouble of describing them, to its increased use as a verb concerned more with the application of a problem-solving process (Walsh, 1996), speaks to an increase in its use and perceived value across organisations globally.

Clark & Clark (1979) established that not only has this common phenomenon persisted for some time, but it can hinder understanding between parties. The implication for design is that this has clouded stakeholders' expectations of what design is and what it can deliver.

Design now enhances the outcomes of numerous innovation activities worldwide, as organisations utilise it to create better, more effective methods of solving problems – daily.

With this increased use comes the challenge of ensuring Design Innovation remains innovative, as by definition innovation can only exist in a continuum, defined not only by what comes before it, but how it is received (Erlhoff & Marshall, 2008).

For years, Designers have done the “receiving” – praising and critiquing each other in relative isolation of wider public response and acceptance. With the rise of Design for Industry however, comes an environment which provides an opportunity to better understand diffusion and adoption.

This opportunity within Industry will only continue to exist for as long as design continues to add corporate value. At present, this value is largely undersold by designers who despite this recent shift in usage of the word design, appear to remain focused on object or artefact-based Industry outcomes.

This is not the fault of designers, however, but instead simply a result of Industry not being aware of this shift. Herein lies the opportunity to ensure designers are educated and equipped to Design for Impact.

But what is design impact and how should we measure it?

A 50-50 split between business and academic attendees at the 5th Design for Business Research Conference held in May 2015 as part of the Melbourne International Design Week suggests that perhaps it is industry which is best placed to determine the most suitable metrics. This trans-disciplinary event showcased research from around the globe, sparking discourse and debate on the future role of design as a strategic resource in building a competitive business advantage. Such advantages seem not to be isolated to one particular industry nor restricted to those businesses who can afford to play in this space. Successes and failings, but most importantly learnings are being reported from a plethora of organisations, all shapes and sizes. Further, it is multi-platform programs such as this conference that allow researchers and practitioners to lead the way in building knowledge and more seriously disseminating it to the businesses that need it the most.

This issue of the Journal of Design, Business and Society illustrates how industry has already begun to assess this. The five articles selected for inclusion all offer Ideas on Design in this transitional, disruptive age.

The first article examines “sensemaking” in design as a capability for organisational and strategic change within a case study conducted on Zodiac Aerospace. Zodiac is a world leader in aerospace equipment and systems for commercial, regional and business aircraft, as well as helicopters and space applications. This article is written by Julia Debacker, Jürgen Tange, and Christine de Lille of Delft University of Technology. Debacker is a PhD researcher in Service Design for aviation, while both Tange and de Lille’s main areas of research include the design of services, user-centered design, and how this impacts organisations.

Following this we have an article by Gabriella Spinelli from Brunel University, which considers innovation from the user’s perspective – specifically for elderly consumers, in order to enhance technology-based products. The user studies for this paper have been conducted in London and Tokyo. Spinelli’s experience is in designing interaction, technologies and communication from a user perspective. Her research interests have attracted funding from the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council, the National Police Improvements Agency, the Technology Strategy Board, and the DAIWA Foundation.

Our third article is by Nico Florian Klenner and Lasse Hartz-Olsson of Copenhagen Business School and Brett Capron of CobaltNiche Design. The study examines how design can be employed to create a competitive advantage for start-ups in seeking external funding. It shows how competitive advantage might be realised, and proposes a model that explains how the fundraising process leading to an investment decision might be influenced by design. Both Klenner and Hartz-Olsson’s research sits at the intersection between business and design and Capron is an experienced product designer with an Industrial Design and Mechanical Engineering background.

The fourth article investigates and articulates the role of mindset within design thinking and capability and practice. The paper is based on studies conducted through a doctoral research program, but is framed around the practices of the strategic design consultancy Huddle. It is co-written by Zaana Howard and Melis Senova of Huddle and Gavin Melles of Swinburne University of Technology. Howard's recently-completed PhD focused on design thinking in practice and the development of design thinking capability within organisations. Senova's areas of expertise include service strategy and strategic service design. Melles is Senior Lecturer in Swinburne University's School of Design, with grants in the areas of design education, design thinking and sustainability.

Lastly, our fifth article from Piia Ryttilähti, Simo Rontti, and Satu Miettinen from the University of Lapland focuses on service design integration within business development. This research proposes an iterative action research framework for developing the Finnish digital business ecosystem with the use of service design thinking and tools applied to six Finnish case studies. Ryttilähti's design research focuses on regional research and development projects. Rontti's work as a project manager and university lecturer incorporates a research focus on service design methodologies and environments. As a professor at the University of Lapland, Miettinen's research interests are in the areas of social and public service development as well as digital service development.

We believe these five papers to be insightful, positively-impacting examples of this hybrid research area, and trust the readers of this second issue of the Journal of Design, Business and Society find them as exciting and inspiring as we do.

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